

## Book reviews

**Oxford textbook of medicine.** 2nd ed. By D J Weatherall, J G G Ledingham and D A Warrell. (Vol I, Sections 1 – 12; Vol II, Sections 13 – 28. £95.00). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

The pride in British medicine that was established by this flagship — the first edition of the *Oxford textbook of medicine* — is rekindled by the second edition. Some rearrangement and expansion of sections have occurred. The first edition indicated that the book was intended for anyone studying or practising clinical medicine (as a first reference source for general practitioners and specialists) and this new edition amply fulfils that challenge. A section on primary care brings this discipline into its rightful place in such a textbook and helps to break down any artificial barrier that may exist between hospital and family practice medicine.

One looks for updating between the two editions and apart from increase in size there are 'improvements' throughout — almost completely new and recent references in the section on pituitary and hypothalamic disorders, an account of CT scanning in pituitary and adrenal disease, developments such as magnetic resonance imaging included in the cardiovascular disease section. The section on respiratory disease has illuminating descriptions of the pathophysiology of the airways and gas exchange. The clinical section on asthma is updated to modern concepts. Rheumatology and connective tissue disorders is expanded from eight to 15 subsections. AIDS, dealt with in only three pages, may (one hopes) be in the end a true perspective or, alternatively, this field is changing so rapidly that we can await a major assessment of this condition in a third edition.

Pleasure at a local author's inclusion, Professor David Simpson in Microbiology. Pleasure in Sir Douglas Black's quotation of a local poet — Louis McNeice — 'And green is life's own golden tree'. This book is surely a golden tree that will grow in future decades. I was so charmed with this book that I went out immediately to buy a copy as a present. It weighed 16 lb — but good value at £95.

JAW

**Clinical medicine: a textbook for medical students and doctors.** Edited by Parveen J Kumar and Michael L Clark, with the assistance of William F Jackson. (pp 1011. £14.95, paperback). London: Baillière Tindall, 1987.

The editors of this multi-author text from the St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical School admit that there must be a good reason to write a new textbook of medicine. They make the somewhat audacious claim that none of those currently available adequately conveys the detail and background needed for medical practice in the late 1980s and 1990s. It is difficult to see that the text lives up to this claim when there is, for example, no mention of ambulatory pH monitoring in suspected reflux oesophagitis or reference to branch chain amino acids, while at the same time it seems necessary to remind the reader that food is required to provide the body with energy. Nevertheless, the overall balance of the text is good. There are important chapters on infectious diseases incorporating advice on antibiotic chemotherapy which is up to date, and others on basics of genetics, molecular biology and immunology. The latter provides important background information for modern medical practice.

All the authors of the various sections were on the staff at Barts and this contributes undoubtedly to the generally high standard and uniformity of presentation of the text, sometimes not achieved in multi-author books. The text is clear and concise. It is well illustrated with line diagrams, radiographs and other imagery. There is an important mistake in the title of Fig 16.21 which may cause confusion in the diagnosis of thyroid disease. There are helpful tables for reference and particularly useful are clear descriptions of practical procedures in everyday clinical practice such as arterial cannulation, jugular venous puncture and liver biopsy. The chapters all contain references to further reading. These are largely monographs in appropriate topics.

In view of the amount of material which has been collated in this text, it must at the price represent very good value for money in its paperback form when compared with the more recent editions of established textbooks.

AHGL